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which is not only superfluous but misleading. On the other hand, no apology is necessary for adding another to the list of translations of *Bēowulf*, when it preserves the general high standard of the present volume. With its sane and scholarly illustrative comment, its adequate reproduction of the original, and its attractive and inexpensive form, it should rank with the best modern renderings, not only in German, but in English as well.

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*The Moral System of Shakespeare, a Popular Illustration of Fiction as the Experimental Side of Philosophy.* By Richard G. Moulton. New York, the Macmillan Company, 1903. 800, pp. viii, 381.

‘Another volume of Shakespeare criticism!’ says the weary student, as he reads the title of Professor Moulton’s book, ‘Is there anything new in it?’ At least, he will find no rehashing of the meagre details of Shakespeare’s life, no discussion of dates, or authorship, or sources, no new attempt to wring from this drama or that any evidence as to Shakespeare’s psychical states. ‘Indeed, this book does not concern itself in any way with the man Shakespeare! if any of my readers inclines to the view that the plays of Shakespeare were written by Lord Bacon, or, for that matter, by Queen Elizabeth, he will find nothing in the pages that follow to disturb his faith. “Shakespeare” is only used as a convenient name for the whole body of thirty-six dramas usually attributed to William Shakespeare, by whomsoever these dramas may have been composed, in whatsoever way they may have been put together.’

If this new volume of criticism is not personal nor historical, neither is it of the showman-critic type. Shakespeare is not put through his paces with admiring ejaculations of ‘How beautiful! How sublime!’ The book is as purely objective as the plays themselves. Surely this is a virtue.

Professor Moulton calls his study ‘The Moral System of Shakespeare,’ and the prospective reader will wish to know what

this doubtful title implies. Is it to be a series of moral sermons on Shakespearian texts? The author may explain in his own words: 'Every degree of success in discovering and coördinating moral ideas in the Drama may lay claim to the broad sense of the word system.' While under the term moral 'we are open to consider all that touches character, the ways of men, the aims, motives, impulses, whether of individuals, or of classes; all that is covered by the Latin word *mores*.'

Whenever we attempt to coördinate or reduce to a 'System' so complex a range of truths as is implied in the last sentence, we expose ourselves to two serious dangers. Either our system will be so involved that only the mind of the author (if indeed his) will be able to grasp it, or else in our attempt to simplify we shall 'falsen some of our matere.' Fortunately Professor Moulton has chosen to err in the direction of simplicity. His discussion is divided into three books, of which the first is called 'Root ideas of Shakespeare's moral system.' Here we are dealing mainly with that great mystery of life which has to do with punishment and reward. The way of the transgressor is always hard, but it does not always lead to retribution; neither do the righteous always receive what seems to us their just reward. The first chapter deals with right triumphant as shown in the career of Henry V; the second shows us 'wrong and retribution' in the fate of Richard III; the third chapter portrays the mystery of innocent suffering in Romeo and Juliet; from *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* are drawn illustrations of 'wrong and restoration'; a concluding chapter develops the principle, already formulated by Professor Moulton in his *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, of the contrast between the 'life without' and the 'life within,' showing that reward and retribution may be found sometimes in one of these domains, sometimes in the other. The five chapters which constitute Book II, 'Shakespeare's world in its moral complexity,' though interesting in themselves, are not so clearly organized. Among the subjects treated are 'Comedy as life in equilibrium,' 'Tragedy as equilibrium overthrown,' 'The moral significance of humor.' The last book deals with 'The forces of life in Shakespeare's moral world,' such as personality, character as a web of habits, the trend of history, the supernatural, 'moral accident and overruling providence.'

One feels that a scheme like this has hardly the right to lay claim even to 'the broad sense of the word system.' A more accurate title would have been 'moral laws in Shakespeare' or perhaps better 'Shakespeare's plays as illustrations of moral laws,' for the real value of the book, and its value is considerable, lies not in the system it develops, or tries to develop, but in its analysis of important plays and characters. Some of the criticisms given repeat in part those of Professor Moulton's earlier volume; but there the emphasis was placed on plot and structure, here it is on character. Deserving of special attention are the discussions of the characters of Coriolanus and Macbeth, and of the Shakespearian conception of comedy. Where so much good matter is offered, we shall surely not quarrel with the author's title, nor even with his general plan. His analyses are subtle and illuminating, and usually convincing.

I trust it is not necessary to enter into any long defense of the author's critical methods. It is easy, of course, to laugh at some of the terms in which his analysis is expressed; the 'clash of primary and secondary plots in a common climax,' 'complicating villany action,' 'resolving farcical action'—there is no need to pile up examples. Apollo and the muses would never suspect that such phrases as these belonged to literary criticism. But no serious student of Shakespeare, who has given either of Professor Moulton's books a fair hearing can fail to have profited. Let us grant the worst that the opposing school affirm, though the point is by no means established, that close analysis injures our aesthetic enjoyment of the play. The injury at most will be temporary, and after a few weeks the play may be re-read or re-seen aesthetically with clearer comprehension, and deeper emotion. If we have a single flower to enjoy, we do not pick it to pieces to study its structure, for no florist on earth can replace the petals and give us once more a perfect whole; the beauty is destroyed forever. But after we have 'picked to pieces' a drama, there is an ardent power in the heart and mind of any man who has any right to talk about 'aesthetic enjoyment' which will fuse the *disjecta membra* into the perfect whole in which the poet has first presented them.

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